

19 January

A BOUQUET OF BARBED WIRE - Andrea Newman.

Soap opera gone Greek.

OUT.

CLEAN STRAW FOR NOTHING - George Johnson.

OUT.

THE BIG WIND - Beatrice Coggan

OUT.

SEE YOU IN YASHUKUNI - Gerald Manley.

OUT.

What can explain the motive of the publishers in sending up these books?

A TOUCH OF DANIEL - Peter Tinniswood.

Not funny.

OUT.

JOHANNA AT DAYBREAK - R. C. Hutchinson.

Some of his early work was, I thought, most impressive, but all to be said about this is that there's not a headache in a barrellful.

OUT.

THE LAST SUMMER - Ian Crichton Smith.

Respectable but mediocre.

OUT.

WESTWARD TO LAUGHTER - Colin Macinnes.

Respectable but mediocre.

OUT.

JOHN BROWN'S BODY - A. L. Barker.

This seems to me a very good work indeed. The fascination of the moronic girl is beautifully done, and so is the doomed quality of Shilling. The course of the action is inevitable. Quite original. Just a touch of Compton-Burnett about the wife and the sister, but the rest is peculiar to the author.

IN.

MONK DAWSON - Piers Paul Read.

If one is writing a book about the collision between the world and its ways and an individual governed by conscience, one must get the ways of the world and the

MONK DAWSON (contd.)

world dead right. This is full of simpletonish error about the ways things happen. E.g., a rich woman might be foul to a waitress, but she would be most unlikely to call her a "stupid bitch"; and most modern wall paints used in factories and institutions are washable. On every page I was tripped up by that sort of simpletonish invention.

OUT.

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD - Brian W. Aldiss.

It is remarkable that this is the only book submitted which makes use of modern technique, except Ann Quinn's very mimsy 'Passages', and I think its Joyce-ian tricks come off. The whole idea of the hippy Messiah seems to me well worked out, though it is curious how all the left-wing s.f.'s hark back to Hitler, who is not a contemporary figure. The verse, of course, is pure Auden, but the prose seems to me quite good. I like the remark of the Messiah "I need only the many now."

IN.

PASSAGES - Ann Quin.

Unbearable.

OUT.

THE WATERFALL - Margaret Drabble.

Of course Margaret Drabble is very gifted, but "The Waterfall" is an appropriate title for a book with a heroine who is all wet.

OUT.